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Rough draft

The Impact of Family Structure on Children

Children in the United States grow up in a variety of family structures. Single parent families and two-parent families are created and recreated through marriage, divorce, remarriage, cohabitation and births outside of marriage. One-third of all children are born to unmarried mothers (Bumpass, 1984). The decline of the “traditional” family has spawned a large literature attempting to measure the importance of family structure in determining child/youth outcomes. Although some may argue that one will find little to no evidence that youths who spend more years in single parent or stepparent households have worse outcomes than youths from intact households, many studies prove that children raised in unstable family homes perform more poorly in school and are more likely to become sexually active, commit illegal acts, and use illegal drugs at young ages.